

**Draft Summary of the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group Meeting
Oroville Facilities Relicensing (FERC Project No. 2100)
June 24, 2004**

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted a meeting for the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group (RSWG) on June 24, 2004 in Oroville.

A summary of the discussion, decisions made, and action items is provided below. This summary is not intended to be a transcript, analysis of the meeting, or to indicate agreement or disagreement with any of the items summarized, except where expressly stated. The intent is to present a summary for interested parties who could not attend the meeting. The following are attachments to this summary:

Attachment 1	Meeting Agenda
Attachment 2	Meeting Attendees
Attachment 3	Flip Chart Notes
Attachment 4	Handout: Comparison of Social Capacity Assessment (New) with Spatial Standards Used
Attachment 5	Handout: Adjusted Lake Oroville Sites Base Numbers; Vinton Gulch Car-top BR projected recreation use
Attachment 6	Handout: Procedure for Converting Recreation Days (by Site) to Visitor Days (by Site and Origin of Visitor)
Attachment 7	Presentation: Study R5 (Assess Recreation Areas Management)
Attachment 8	Presentation: Study R8 (Carrying Capacity)
Attachment 9	Presentation: Draft Study R13 (Recreation Surveys)
Attachment 10	Presentation: Study R17 (Recreation Needs Analysis)

Introduction

Attendees were welcomed to the RSWG meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations and the desired outcomes of the meeting were discussed. The meeting agenda and list of meeting attendees are appended to this summary as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. Meeting flip chart notes are included as Attachment 3. The RSWG observed a moment of silence in memory of Michael Pierce.

Action Items – May 20, 2004 RSWG Meeting

A summary of the May 20, 2004 RSWG meeting is posted on the relicensing web site. The Facilitator reviewed the status of action items from that meeting as follows:

Action Item #R109	Provide additional information/data to describe the difference between the social capacity (i.e., visitor expectations) and the recreation standards.
Status:	Jim Vogel (EDAW) provided a description of social versus spatial capacity standards in the context of Study R-7 (Reservoir Boating) using a handout (see Attachment 4). Information on perceptions of crowding from the recreation surveys was used to determine the social capacity of boating on Lake Oroville. Spatial capacity related to boating is based on physical measures (i.e., acres per boat) and distinguished between all boats (which include moored boats) and active boats. For both social and spatial capacity, a classification system was established that ranks capacity as either "below", "approaching", or "exceeding". Applying this classification scheme to the project for peak-season weekends and holidays, all social capacity measures across sites were either below or approaching capacity. Measuring spatial capacity, active boats were below capacity at all sites, while all boats ranged across capacity levels depending on the site evaluated. There is no correlation between the social and spatial classification schemes. The spatial dimension of the reservoir was taken

into consideration when formulating conclusions in the report. One participant noted that the measure of all boats is more appropriate than just looking at active boats (Study R-7 provided both). It was also noted that social (crowding) responses are based on people with different crowding thresholds.

Action Item #R110:

Status:

Investigate the success of volunteer programs for areas such as the OWA. Two separate issues were discussed in the context of this action item. The success of volunteer programs has not been evaluated, and this issue was dropped since those present at both meetings stated that they were concerned about the second issue. This second issue related to the status of legislation that addresses the ability of the State to use volunteer groups and was also discussed. Currently, the State must pay the prevailing wage rate on all projects it administers however; there is proposed legislation that may change this requirement. The status of this legislation will be researched further.

On a related note, one participant asked that OWA staffing issues be discussed at the next RSWG meeting. The concern is that funding proposals for the OWA may be disregarded because there is currently no staff serving the OWA and thus it may be perceived that funding is not needed.



Action Item #R111:

Status:

Summarize the Cross-Resource Task Force meeting notes (April 20, 2004) and attach to the May 20, 2004 Meeting Summary.

The Cross-Resource Task Force meeting notes were attached to the May RSWG meeting summary, which is posted on the Relicensing web site. This action item is complete.

Review Comments on Study Reports

The RSWG was given the opportunity to provide comments on the study reports that were presented at the May 2004 RSWG meeting. A summary of the verbal comments and responses (if available) are provided below.

R3 – Assess Relationship of Project Operations and Recreation

The following comments were made by the RSWG on Study R-3 (responses will be compiled in an appropriate manner to be determined later):

- Question: Did the study address lake level changes at other recreation sites, specifically the effect on recreation visitation? This was not evaluated; however, there are some recreation site comparisons in the R13 study. Study R12 evaluated the relationship between lake levels and visitation for Lake Oroville only.
- The report should not be based solely on a historically wet period (1993-2003). It should also consider dry periods, such as 1983-1993. Jim Vogel (EDAW) explained that the study focused on the period of 1990-2002, which contained both dry and wet years.
- A common perception of Lake Oroville is that there is no place to launch boats or to park after launching. These perceptions keep people from returning to the lake, especially if these perceptions are based on initial visits.
- There is a need for adequate boat launch opportunities and parking during low and high lake levels.
- There is a need to meet visitation capacity during peak recreation periods.
- Question: What is the relationship between facilities/improvements and recreation visitation? This relationship is not known, but this relationship will be evaluated during the definition and evaluation of alternatives in the PDEA.
- There was a concern that the Diversion Pool is not on the list of “developed” sites on page 4-1.

- The report should include an analysis of the impacts of spillway releases on trail facilities. In the past, trails have been closed due to releases without being subject to a public process. This is noted and will be inserted as an addendum to the report.
- Boat stranding at the Afterbay is recognized in the report, but it should not be considered a “minimal” occurrence. Boat stranding occurs as a result of pump-back operations on Sundays and is considered routine by local boaters.
- There is a desire to extend the boat ramps at the Afterbay. However, the shallow slope and permit process are constraints to extending boat launches at this site.
- There is a need to address the mud issue at the Larkin Road car-top boat launch, which is used by all types of boats. Mud has been deposited at the end of the ramp so that when the reservoir level drops, the mud inhibits boat launching.

R4 – Assess Relationship of Fish & Wildlife Management and Recreation

The following comments were made by the RSWG on Study R-4 (responses will be compiled in an appropriate manner to be determined later):

- Question: Because the report concludes that improved agency coordination is important to improve the recreation experience for visitors, would the stakeholder group concept proposed in the settlement agreement address this issue? DWR explained that agency coordination is already an on-going effort. There is the need to provide transparency into this coordination process.
- The potential to turn over the OWA to another State agency was discussed based on the lack of funding for DFG to operate the site. There are no strong conclusions on this issue in the report. Question: Will this issue be addressed in the Recreation Needs Analysis? Funding issues are addressed more fully in Relicensing Study R-5.
- Although it is technically correct that mining activities are not consistent with the Fish and Game Code, it was noted that mining practices are compatible with wildlife as a result of habitat creation (e.g., brood ponds) and brush clearing.
- One participant noted that this report provided the best description of applicable hunting regulations in the Project area he has seen.
- There is the need to look at potential actions and their effect on the environment. This will happen through the PDEA process and in Environmental Work Group (EWG) studies.
- It was noted that this study calls for an update to the current management plan for the OWA.
- The classification system used to categorize wildlife areas managed by DFG was explained to the RSWG.
- There is no reference to ORAC history on wildlife management and/or OWA issues in the report.
- Question: Can DPR manage the OWA with its current funding limitations?
- Funding is needed in the OWA.
- Aeration of water bodies (ponds) improves aquatic habitat for fish populations.

R12 – Projected Recreation Use

The following comments were made by the RSWG on Study R-12 (responses will be compiled in an appropriate manner to be determined later):

- Need good (accurate) population projections to quantify changes in population.
- Question: Why are different data sources used for different time periods for population projections (Report Table 5.2-2)? Study author will check accuracy of source citations.
- It was clarified that latent demand means there would be more demand for a particular recreation activity in the future.
- It was noted that there is a higher latent demand for equestrian use than for bicycling. Question: Will this influence the needs analysis?

- There is the desire to understand the levels of present equestrian use. Question: How are true levels of equestrian use known if no cameras were used?
- Question: Why are the latent demand conclusions in R12 different than those present in the statewide DPR survey? It was explained that the conclusions in R12 represent forecasts, not just latent demand. Latent demand was just one factor used in developing the forecasts.
- The distinction between recreation activity days (which accounts for multiple uses) and number of visitors was clarified.
- Population of those counties that primarily serve the project should be weighed more heavily in the recreation projections. It was noted that population projections were not directly used in the recreation projections based on modeling efforts that discount the relationship between population and recreation use at the Oroville Facilities.
- Other sources of data / information that were used to formulate the recreation projections include the Cordell (regional) study, site-specific survey information, and professional judgment.
- One constraint to applying other studies to recreation use projections at Lake Oroville is that the specific types of recreation activities do not always match.
- All types of boating activity were grouped into single boating category.
- Recreation use projections were based on existing conditions, and did not consider potential future facility improvements and other recreation enhancements.
- There were concerns with using the existing use numbers (from Study R9) as the starting point for the recreation use projections because there are too many “broken” facilities that currently exist at Lake Oroville and other related recreation sites.
- The term “expert judgment” needs to be defined more clearly in the report.
- One participant suggested that camping, swimming, and boating are the three primary building blocks for managing future recreation use at the Oroville Facilities.
- Some feel there is a demand for whitewater activities in the Oroville area and they feel this activity could draw people to the region.
- Question: Why isn't trail use forecasted? Jim Vogel explained that growth rates for hiking, biking, and horseback riding are forecasted, and trail use is an activity included in projected use forecasts for appropriate sites.
- Equestrian use should not be combined with other trail activities.
- Recreation fees should be considered in the recreation use projections.
- The baseline recreation use numbers for Lake Oroville sites from the R9 study were adjusted to reflect average lake level conditions (note: 2002/03 was considered a below-average water year). Jim Vogel (EDAW) explained the adjustment process, as well as the four-step process for projecting recreation use by site and activity (see Attachment 5).

R18 – Recreation Activity, Spending, and Associated Economic Impacts

Tom Wegge (TCW Economics) made a brief presentation related to Study R18 prior to opening up the discussion to questions and answers. The presentation addressed the visitor spending profiles, which are a key factor in estimating recreation-related economic impacts that are the focus of the two economic studies. Specifically, he described the process of converting recreation days to visitor days for the purposes of the economic studies (see Attachment 6). Recreation days, which count one person stopping at several Project sites during a day as separate visits, needed to be converted to visitor days, which treats one person as one observation regardless of number of activities engaged in or sites visited, based on the fact that the recreation spending profiles were developed on a per capita per day basis. The conversion factor was based on the recreation surveys, which collected data related to number of activities and sites visited by respondents.

The following comments were made by the RSWG on Study R-18 (responses will be compiled in an appropriate manner to be determined later):

- The numbers in the report should be rounded so as not to mislead readers regarding the precision of the economic data presented. Tom Wegge explained that some numbers were artifacts of modeling calculations and should not be interpreted as conveying unwarranted precision.
- Question: Did the study consider visitors (i.e., visitor days) that were not officially counted in the R9 estimates of recreation use? Were the visitation data adjusted?
- A typographical error in Appendix B of the report was noted; however, the error does not affect the results of the study.
- It was noted that demographic information was collected as part of the survey efforts and that information is reported in Relicensing Study R13.
- Question: Was the same factor used for residents and non-residents when converting recreation days to visitor days? Yes, the same factor was used because there were no good data that suggested different factors should be used.
- Tom Wegge explained that based on past experience, generally the recreation spending profiles do not appear high or low. It was acknowledged that spending patterns would change if Oroville had more of a tourism-based economy.
- One participant noted the need for a strategy to target or attract businesses that retain more money in the local economy to maximize economic benefits.

R19 – Fiscal Impacts

The following comments were made by the RSWG on Study R-19 (responses will be compiled in an appropriate manner to be determined later):

- The RSWG noted that Butte County realizes a fiscal deficit as it relates to recreation use and O&M of the Oroville Facilities. This is due in part to the imbalance of expenditures and revenues between the County and the City of Oroville.
- It was clarified that the values in the report are annual values and not a net present value of dollars over time.
- Tom Wegge explained that the net fiscal effects presented in the report might underestimate fiscal revenues, thus overstating fiscal deficits, because there is a range of population-based inter-governmental revenues that were not considered in the analysis.
- The report does not consider payments in-lieu of property taxes.
- One participant noted that there would be different economic and fiscal impacts if the Project were never developed. It was clarified that the relicensing studies do not focus on pre-Project effects.

Distribution of Study Reports

The Consultant Team distributed and presented four new study reports at the RSWG meeting: Study R5 (Assess Recreation Areas Management), Study R8 (Carrying Capacity), Draft Study R13 (Recreation Surveys), and Study R17 (Recreation Needs Analysis). The PowerPoint presentations for these studies are included with the meeting summary as Attachments 7 through 10, respectively.

During and after each presentation, there was opportunity for brief questions and answers, which are summarized below along with points of clarification. The RSWG was instructed to review the reports and provide comments in writing or at the next RSWG meeting.

R5 – Assess Recreation Areas Management

For more information on Relicensing Study R5, please refer to Attachment 7.

- This study evaluated the LOSRA overall but not specific sites within the LOSRA.

- Question: What are the inconsistencies in the Davis-Dolwig Act that are referenced in the report? Doug Rischbieter (DWR) explained that DWR and the State Water Contractors (SWC) are responsible for recreation facility costs at the time of construction of a water project, but ongoing recreation funding is the responsibility of the State General Fund. Regardless, FERC places the burden of responsibility for License compliance (including recreation management) on DWR, and therefore, DWR and SWC will address any FERC-mandated recreation needs.
- It was noted by RSWG participants that other reservoir-based recreation sites are self-sufficient because the service providers do not want to pay for operating and capital costs themselves. The service providers fix problems quickly, use concessionaires, and charge fees to address funding needs.
- It was the opinion of several RSWG participants that the LOSRA is not self-sufficient because it is mismanaged.
- Question: Were FERC complaints considered in the R5 analysis? No, FERC complaints were not directly considered, but information from the recreation surveys was reviewed.

R8 – Carrying Capacity

For more information on Relicensing Study R8, please refer to Attachment 8.

- Spatial considerations in the carrying capacity analysis focused on potential for facility expansion.
- Facility considerations applied to existing facilities only.
- This study did not attempt to quantify potential capacity numbers (e.g., how many people can be accommodated on the existing trail system); instead, it focused on an evaluation of existing recreation use on capacity issues.
- Proposed facility capacity numbers are based on established criteria.

Draft R13 – Recreation Surveys

For more information on Relicensing Study R13, please refer to Attachment 9.

- Doug Rischbieter (DWR) explained that this was the only Recreation Study Report released as a "Draft," owing to limited review time weighed against the need to get the basic survey information into the hands of the Collaborative. A final report will be submitted in January 2005 with the License Application, but a revised ("final") version is not anticipated to be distributed to the RSWG unless substantial changes are made to the current draft.
- One participant noted that turkeys are hunted throughout the project area, not just in the OWA.
- There were concerns expressed regarding the interpretation of survey results. For example, a 6 percent rate of trail encounters was considered "low" in the report. Question: Shouldn't the RSWG be able to help analyze the survey results?

R17 – Recreation Needs Analysis

For more information on Relicensing Study R17, please refer to Attachment 10.

- There are concerns with there not being enough time at the meeting to address the R17 study. This is especially critical because the Needs Analysis will be reviewed and used at the settlement negotiations next week.
- The RSWG was asked to review the summary of the Needs Analysis. It will be presented in detail at the settlement negotiations on Tuesday 6/29.
- The organization of the Needs Analysis is conducive to tracking particular issues and/or recreation activities. Section 5 addresses recreation activities, while Section 6 represents a location-specific evaluation of recreation needs.
- It was clarified that the Needs Analysis does not represent the proposed Recreation Plan.

- Existing quality of facilities is considered using professional judgment.
- Activities that are considered lesser priority may be considered recreation “enhancements”.
- New swimming opportunities are engineering-dependent.
- A comprehensive trails plan is considered a need. It would include the number, location and type of trails, as well as O&M considerations.
- The facility sketches in the appendices represent existing conditions only.
- Question: How many sites in the OWA are identified in the analysis as needing improvement?
- Question: Why is the Needs Analysis being presented to the RSWG in final form? It should have been presented in draft form for RSWG discussion. Many participants expressed concerns that after participating for several years in a collaborative process to get to this point, the most significant report is being hurried through the technical work group without adequate discussion and potential to comments. DWR noted that all study reports, including R17, are subject to public comments. All study reports will include an errata sheet, or other appropriate and consistent method of addressing comments and any corrections/additions, prior to being submitted to FERC. DWR agreed to post a copy of R17 on the relicensing web site as soon as possible so that it is available to all stakeholders.

Framework for Recreation Management Plan

Due to time constraints, the RSWG agreed to defer discussion of Agenda Item V (Framework for Recreation Management Plan) to their July RSWG meeting.

Next Steps

The RSWG agreed to change the July meeting date to from July 29, 2004 to July 22, 2004. The next RSWG meeting will be held on the following date/time:

Date: Thursday, July 22, 2004
 Time: 6:00 to 10:00 PM
 Location: Oroville

Action Items

The following list of action items identified by the RSWG includes a description of the action, the participant responsible for the action, and item status.

Action Item #R112: Research the status of pending legislation related to the requirement to pay prevailing wage rates to workers on all State-administered projects.

Responsible: DWR
Due Date: July 22, 2004

Action Item #R113: Post an electronic copy of Study R17 (Recreation Needs Analysis) to the Project web site so that it can be distributed to interested stakeholders.

Responsible: DWR / Consultant Team
Due Date: July 22, 2004